

From: Cynthia Ingelfinger [mailto:cingelfinger@verizon.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 05, 2012 12:17 PM
To: Baskin, Kathleen (EEA)
Subject: Please protect our rivers

April 5, 2012

Kathleen Baskin, P.E.
Director of Water Policy and Planning
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA

Dear Ms. Baskin,

I am writing in response to the Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) "Framework" proposal of February 3, 2012. My family and I love being out on the water. We canoe, kayak, fish and swim in the Ipswich River and in the waters of the Ipswich Estuary. The kids are endlessly excited by the cardinal flowers, turtles, birds, frogs, beaver, muskrat and even the river otter that we come across on our adventures. Our rivers and wetlands are a gift, especially in our increasingly developed world of screen time, homework, and car rides. Keeping enough water in the rivers is critical for the health of the ecosystem. My husband and I are teaching our kids to save water and remind them that we share the water with the animals that we see in and around the river and marsh. This is a message that people can understand. Please consider it in your final decision about how much water can be taken from our rivers each year.

I appreciate the tremendous effort that state staff and others have dedicated to the SWMI process. The scientific findings and development of ecologically-based streamflow criteria represent a major step forward. However, serious weaknesses in the proposed SWMI Framework undermine its credibility, negate its effectiveness and thwart truly sustainable water management. These deficiencies must be addressed.

The goal of sustainable water management should be to use water wisely, so that our rivers, streams and wetlands have enough clean water to support healthy populations of native fish. Protecting the rivers that are healthy, and restoring those that are not, should be explicit goals of SWMI.

Currently, about 20% of Massachusetts sub-basins are seriously degraded by water withdrawals, and another 16% are vulnerable to becoming degraded if they were subjected to increased withdrawals. Yet the SWMI Framework proposes safe yield withdrawal limits that are several times higher than the latest science indicates is safe for fish; exempts some permitted withdrawals from having to fully minimize and mitigate the impacts of their withdrawal; and allows "non-essential" water use when flows are below safe levels. This is not sustainable water management.

Nothing in the SWMI proposal will prevent vulnerable rivers, streams and wetlands from falling below safe levels or being pumped dry; this is unacceptable. We can and must do better. We must seize this once-in-a-generation opportunity to begin a process of gradual restoration of degraded rivers, streams and wetlands. We should start by establishing protective safe yield withdrawal limits consistent with the latest research.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Ingelfinger

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Maeve feeling empowered and free!

